

PETER DE WINT



WALTER ARMSTRONG.

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MEMOIR
OF
PETER DE WINT







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BY
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NOTE.

THE following memoir has been written under difficulties arising partly from the lapse of time since its subject was in the flesh, partly from the extreme uneventfulness of the life he lived. Its author hopes, however, it may serve as a skeleton to be clothed as materials come to light. For the information it contains he has chiefly to thank Miss Tatlock, Mr. J. M. Heathcote, Mr. William Vokins, and Mr. James Orrock.



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I.

EIFTY years ago the two countries which have led the van in the march of modern art, could each have boasted of their share in a school of painting both original in aim and unique in achievement. But to boast of it was outside their thoughts. In France its members were neglected, were almost left to starve; while in England, with the one great exception of Constable, who had helpful friends and resources outside his art, they were compelled to live partly by teaching those over whom time spent was time lost, partly by forsaking that medium of expression in which alone a fame that should be at once wide and lasting, could be won.

The chief of those who formed the English branch, or rather the English root, of what is really but a single school, were nearly all born between 1780 and 1790. Their French followers—for followers, at least they were, if not disciples—came into the world between 1800 and 1820. Corot alone advanced matters a little, and appeared on the scene while the eighteenth century had still four years to run. It may be asked why, with a start of twenty years on an average, our Englishmen did not hold their own better than they

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did? It may be asked why they failed to make it impossible for a modern critic to single out the painter of the *Hay-wain* and to set him up, naked and alone, to face the whole school of Fontainebleau? That they failed was not due to defects in their own powers, but to a peculiarity in the English character which is a virtue or a vice, according to the light in which we look at it.

It can scarcely be denied that England, as a nation, is at once intensely ignorant of art and very fond of pictures. In this country it is hard to find a house of any sort in which the walls are not covered with something those who live within them can fancy to be art. Our picture papers and magazines have had, until within the last year or two, circulations unheard of in the Latin countries, and the demand for artists to supply their wants has been great. In France, speaking roughly, the love of pictures is confined to two classes, to the class with cultivation, and the class with money. The first loves them for their intellectual stimulus, the second for their fame. The French middle class is wanting in the idyllic strain. It does not care for mild reflections of domestic bliss, for mementoes of the woods in which it wandered in youth, or the scenes among which it takes its annual holiday. Climb after dark to the roof of a Paris omnibus, and go the round of the Boulevards. As you lumber along you may glance into the first floor windows, and scarcely in one *appartement* in ten will you see a picture on the walls. There is, in fact, nothing to answer to that multitude of English people, who knowing naught about art as art, being accustomed, indeed, to deny its existence, are yet ready to pay a few guineas for a drawing which reminds them of nature, and a few more for a course of lessons in "how it is done." France, then, does little to seduce the painter from oil, or into the practice of prettiness. Even for those whose natural predilection is for water-colours, it has only been within the last few

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years that a chance of success has come. Frenchmen in advance of their time—Corot, Rousseau, Millet—had no temptation to abandon the struggle. They had to suffer and wait.

In England it was otherwise. Here if few would give some unknown genius a hundred guineas for a picture, there were plenty of modest collectors to pay five for a drawing. The consequence was that the little group of men to whom the glory of founding the nineteenth century school of landscape belongs, remains comparatively obscure, as a group, and the chief credit of the movement is abandoned to that one individual who could afford to paint in oil. No one will grudge Constable his fame. It may even be allowed that he was, on the whole, the ablest as well as the first of those who have created modern landscape. But it is pretty certain that, had conditions been here what they were with the French, three or four others would have stood beside him, and been to him what Troyon, Rousseau, and one or two more are to Corot. And of those others, none perhaps would have loomed larger to the eye than PETER DE WINT.



II.



HE De Wints were Dutch by extraction. The original patronymic was De Windt, and the arms borne by those of the name who still lingered in Holland in the early years of the present century were "four heads proper blowing the four winds." Some members of the family settled in Paris, and some in the West Indies. Others followed their Dutch kin to New England, and from these Peter de Wint was descended. Henry, his father, was the son of one John Peter de Wint, of New York, by whom he was sent to Europe to be trained as a physician. After graduating at Leyden, Henry de Wint came to London to complete his training at St. Thomas's Hospital. While so engaged he seems to have fallen in love with a certain Miss Watson, the daughter of a Scotchman who had become impoverished through devotion to Prince Charlie. This was unfortunate, for the young lady was not only without means herself, but her intervention put an end to a project of marriage which would have brought her lover the hand of a wealthy cousin in America. Henry de Wint and Miss Watson were married in 1773, when the one was twenty and the other nineteen. For a year or two their union seems to have remained a secret; and it was not until he had reached the comparatively mature age of twenty-three, and had two children, that Dr. de Wint's final disinheritance by his father took place.

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Up to this time he had lived on an allowance of two or three hundred a year from America. Thus at twenty-three, with a wife and two children, and the prospect of many more, the young physician found himself cast upon his own resources. He moved from London to the neighbourhood of Cardiff, where he attempted to build up a practice among the poorer classes of the Welsh. Of this he soon grew weary, and in 1781 or thereabouts migrated to Stone, in Staffordshire, where he spent the rest of his life. At Stone ten more children were born to him. Of these Peter was the fourth son.

In the memoir of her husband, left behind in manuscript by the painter's widow, we are told that æsthetic predilections were entirely foreign to his family, of which no member "knew anything of art or cared in the least for pictures." But the old Dutch failing must have been in the blood. Stories of course are told of every painter's precocity; but in the case of De Wint these are unusually definite and unusually significant of purpose. At school he not only scribbled, he made regular attempts to teach his schoolfellows to scribble too, and he so beleaguered his father that in spite of the narrowness of the family means he was allowed to take lessons from a drawing-master, a certain Rogers, who lived at Stafford. He showed too that deep interest in nature without which his imagination might afterwards have starved. He spent days wandering in the fields and along the country bye-roads watching the habits of animals and birds, the growth of trees, the action of the winds. Even at this early age he was content with his own company, was satisfied to store up in his mind the impressions he gathered in his solitary rambles, and to form projects for the future of which his parents only heard when some action of theirs was required to promote fruition.

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It is likely that the comforts of the house at Stone were few, for Dr. de Wint laboured under the peculiar disabilities of those who, after a youth passed in ease, are suddenly called upon to fight the world with their own unassisted powers. To the end of his days he was oppressed, not so much by poverty—for he succeeded in building up a good practice at Stone—as by that incapacity to make the most of means, which is almost as bad. Some hint of the barrenness of his plenishing is to be found in a story his son Peter used to tell in after years. He could clearly remember, he would say, the first time he ever saw a picture. It was an engraving, and its beauty so dazzled him that he thought it must have been done by an angel! This boy Dr. de Wint meant to bring up to his own profession, to which an elder brother was already committed. His training in medicine had even begun, and, in spite of his own strongly asserted repugnance, had made some progress before his father recognized the wish of nature and allowed science to be put aside for art. To this surrender he was driven, perhaps, more by considerations of economy than by any inkling of his son's powers. For we shall find that the indenture which bound Peter to his first master, was supplemented by an agreement that he should serve an extra year beyond the regular seven, in lieu of premium.

It was in 1802 that young De Wint was taken to London and apprenticed to the famous mezzotinter, John Raphael Smith. Thomas Correggio Smith, Raphael's brother, was at that time established at Uttoxeter, not many miles from Stone, where he painted miniatures to supplement a narrow patrimony. Through this Correggio, most likely, Dr. de Wint made the engraver's acquaintance, and both brothers may have had a share in converting him to his son's views. Young De Wint left home for London on the first of April. The day was a Friday too, but it was in vain that his friends pointed out the double omen. His father's

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consent had at last been given, and his own eagerness would not allow an hour to be lost in putting it into effect, and all through his after life he loved to arrange things for Fridays and Firsts of April, if he could, for these, he would say, were his lucky days. On his arrival in London he seems at once to have taken up his abode with Smith, but it was not until June that the indenture was signed which made him a legal apprentice. At that time Smith had among his pupils the future academician and devotee to "high art," William Hilton. Of the two lads De Wint was the senior by some thirty months, and between them a friendship sprang up which was only to end with their lives.

De Wint was followed to the capital by his father, and on the seventh of June the instrument was signed by which the young man surrendered his liberty. This indenture—it lies before me now—"witnesseth that Peter de Wint, son of Henry de Wint, of Stone, in the County of Stafford, Apothecary, doth put himself apprentice to John Raphael Smith, of King Street, Covent Garden, in the County of Middlesex, Engraver and Portrait Painter, to learn his art and with him after the manner of an apprentice to serve, from the day of the date hereof unto the full end and term of seven years, from thence next following to be fully compleat and ended, during which term the said apprentice faithfully shall or will serve, his secrets keep, his lawfull commands everywhere gladly do, &c.": and for all this John Raphael Smith agrees "to teach Peter de Wint the arts and mysteries of engraving and portrait-painting, and to supply him with meat, drink, and lodging." The indenture was supplemented by the agreement already referred to, by which the De Wints undertook that Peter should be at Smith's disposal for an extra year in consideration of his waiving the question of premium.

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The decision to "bind" his son to Raphael Smith throws a side light on Dr. de Wint's character, which confirms what we are told of his youth. The hopefulness which led him to prefer a penniless girl and his own approval to an heiress and the applause of his family, preserved him now from qualms on the score of the engraver's mode of life. For Raphael Smith was a sort of expurgated edition of George Morland. From the deeper debaucheries of Morland he seems to have been free, but he was fond of the cock-pit and the prize-ring, and of the company into which they brought him. Much of his time and substance were wasted in dissipation, and, in spite of certain idyllic tastes, such as fishing, he was, on the whole, not the sort of man to whom a timid father would entrust a lad of eighteen. And yet perhaps there was no great cause for timidity, for Smith was thoroughly good-hearted, generous, and unselfish. All he knew he would teach his pupils; there was no fear of his practising those petty repressions with which clever masters have before now retarded the steps of their scholars. And as for his influence on conduct, De Wint seems from boyhood to have had a way of taking his own line and sticking to it, which must now have been reassuring.

For nearly four years the young man lived in King Street, and divided his time between engraving, painting heads in pastel, and the more congenial occupation of sketching from nature. For Smith had soon discovered that the hearts neither of Hilton nor De Wint were given to the beautiful art in which he himself was to conquer fame. He was, as I have hinted, an enthusiastic fisherman, and on his excursions to some favourite stream he used to take the two apprentices with him, setting them to sketch meanwhile, and, in fact, doing his best, in a very enlightened way, to bring out the special powers with which he saw each to be gifted. His perception

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of De Wint's ability and confidence in his future is also proved, to some extent, by a curious document to be quoted presently.

The relations, however, between Smith and his apprentices were not always cloudless. About a year after De Wint joined the *ménage* in Covent Garden, some events occurred which interfered very much with the comfort of the two young men. Hilton, the more thin-skinned of the pair, determined to run away. He took no one but De Wint into his confidence and when, one fine morning, he was to seek, that stubborn young gentleman declined to betray his whereabouts. Upon this Smith haled him before a magistrate. De Wint refused to break his word to his friend, and was promptly committed to prison for disobedience to his master. There he had to submit to the usual indignities, and to much suffering from cold. It was not until his devotion had reached the ears of the runaway—who was, in fact, under the paternal roof at Lincoln—that the engraver's mind was relieved and his stubborn apprentice set at liberty.

About the time of De Wint's establishment in the King Street household, fear of Napoleon was driving all the youth of the country into the ranks of the volunteers. Among the *pièces justificatives* handed to me for the purposes of this memoir, I find wrapped in a sheet of discoloured paper, two enlistment tickets for the "Saint Margaret's and Saint John's Volunteers." Both have clearly been filled up at the same moment but they bear no date. To all whom it may concern they proclaim that William Hilton and Peter de Wint have been "allowed to join the Battalion." Judging from probabilities, this must have been about 1805, when the friendship was three years old.

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In 1806 both De Wint and Hilton left Smith. How this came about in the case of the younger man I do not know, but with De Wint it was the subject of a curious bargain. We have seen that his articles were dated the 7th June, 1802, and were to be in force for the orthodox seven years. Less than four summers afterwards the engraver restored his pupil to freedom. The terms on which he agreed to do this would be decisive as to his belief in the young man's powers, but for our knowledge of his own careless character. The release will bear quotation. It is dated the 17th of May, 1806. After naming the parties to the agreement, and reciting the indenture of 1802, it goes on to say that, "whereas the said Henry de Wint and Peter de Wint are desirous of being released from the said indentures and covenant . . . the said John Raphael Smith agrees to release them upon terms and conditions, and for the considerations following . . . namely, that the said Peter de Wint shall . . . before the end of one year to be computed from the . . date of these presents, paint in oil colour, in the best manner he is able, nine pictures of the following dimensions respectively, that is to say, six of eleven inches by nine inches, two of one foot three inches and a half by one foot one inch and a half, and one of one foot three inches and a half by one foot and half an inch. And farther that he shall . . . before the end of the then succeeding year, paint in like manner nine other pictures in oil colours of the following dimensions, that is to say, one of one foot three inches and a half by one foot and half an inch, six of one foot and half an inch by ten inches and three-quarters of another inch, one of one foot seven inches by one foot three inches, and one of two feet three inches by one foot ten inches—all of which several pictures are to be landscapes, and to be delivered into the hands and be the absolute property of the said John Raphael Smith," &c., &c. Such agreements are too often made to

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be broken, but on the back of this I find two endorsements, in Smith's writing, acknowledging the receipt of the eighteen pictures promptly to time.

De Wint and Hilton appear to have at once taken lodgings in Broad Street, Golden Square. They were now on the best of terms with their old master, and partly through him they found channels for the sale of their work. But it was at first a hard struggle. They not only had to paint for a living, but at the same time to complete their education. Hilton won admission to the Academy Schools in 1806. It was not until three years later that his friend received the coveted pasteboard which authorised the keeper—at that time fiery old Fuseli—to "Admit Mr. Peter de Wint to be a student in the Royal Academy, subject to the regulations thereof." The card is dated March 8th, 1809; on the back it is thus endorsed: "Admit to the life Mr. Peter de Wint. H. Fuseli, kr.; W. Beechey Visitor. 16th March, 1811." These dates prove that the time usually named for De Wint's admission as a student is two years too early. By this time however he was making an income on which he could live and keep a wife, for a year before his promotion to "the life," he had married, as we shall presently see, his friend Hilton's sister, Harriet.

It was in the early summer of 1806 that the two friends left their master and set up for themselves. But before settling in their new quarters they made an expedition to a city which was afterwards to play a great part in De Wint's career. Hilton's parents were established in Lincoln, and it was a matter of course that in first embarking on the troubled waters of the world as his own captain, he should pay them a visit, and should introduce the friend whose name by that time must have been a household word. Hilton's family

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consisted of father, mother, and one sister. Hilton senior was a painter, mainly of portraits, and had exhibited once or twice at the Academy some twenty years before. He had previously lived at Norwich, and at Leicester had taught drawing in the school kept by the once famous Miss Mary Linwood, the needle-worker. To this lady he afterwards confided his own daughter, Harriet, whose frequent duty it became to read aloud to Mary Linwood as she stitched away at her Raphaels. When the two young men arrived at Lincoln, Harriet was at home for the holidays. She was then fifteen. By her De Wint's heart was at once touched, and before he left the Hiltons to make his way into Staffordshire, to his own birthplace, his attachment had developed into love.

It perhaps required some romance like this to stamp Lincoln so deeply into the painter's heart. In spite of the superbly placed Cathedral and the picturesque irregularity of the streets clustered in its shadow, of the city "above hill," as those who live among its narrow ways so religiously call it, Lincoln is not rich in subjects for the painter. The upper town is small and soon exhausted. The pictorial value of "below hill" lies almost entirely in the contrast it offers to the stately bulk of the church which rises beyond; while the neighbourhood, as far as the eye can reach, is a dead level of heavy clays, intersected by dykes, and but little enriched with timber. And yet the pictures made by De Wint within sight of Lincoln's triple towers may be counted by scores. Much of his time during this first visit was taken up with sketches in oil, some of which he afterwards completed and handed over to Raphael Smith in fulfilment of their bargain.

After these few weeks at Lincoln, spent as only a landscape painter, with health, and hope, and confidence in himself—and in love—can spend them, De Wint moved on into Staffordshire. He made the journey on foot,

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loitering for a week or so in Derbyshire, sketching Matlock High Tor for the first time, and picking up a few more subjects of the same kind to which he often returned. Not long after his arrival at Stone, Hilton joined him. By this time Dr. de Wint had contrived to get on fair terms with fortune. He had built up a good practice, and, although he had scarcely begun to accumulate, he was at least making a sufficient income, and had won the esteem of the people among whom he lived. He shared his practice with his eldest son, who was at this time about thirty-one, married, and with a rapidly increasing family. The never copious materials for De Wint's biographer are here particularly scanty, but now and again we get hints that the skeleton in the family cupboard was the conduct of this eldest son. He seems to have been at once grasping and extravagant, to have been the cause of discomfort during his father's life and of financial embarrassment after his death. Another brother, younger than Peter, two sisters, and Mrs. de Wint completed the family. Dr. de Wint was popular with the neighbours, so his son and his son's friend were well received, were even commissioned to paint a few portraits, which helped materially to lessen the risks of their start in London.

Towards the end of autumn De Wint and Hilton were established in their Broad Street lodgings. Their chief friends seem to have been Mrs. Brooks, an aunt of De Wint's on the mother's side—at whose house they were accustomed to spend their Sundays—and her eldest son, in whom the pair found a companion who for a time turned their duet into a trio. This new friend joined their battalion of volunteers, but soon resigned his membership in order to read for the Church. It was to his influence that the religious bent which was afterwards to become so strong in De Wint, was in the first place due. Later in life

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Mr. Brooks became an honorary Canon of Lincoln and Vicar of St. Mary's, Nottingham. It was about this year 1806 that De Wint was admitted to the famous circle at Dr. Monro's. The days when that genial *padrone* gave a supper and half-a-crown each to young artists to come and sketch, were perhaps over, but De Wint could not fail to be fired by the doctor's enthusiasm and to profit by the splendid collection of Gainsboroughs, Cozenses, Girtins, and Turners he had brought together. Of these the Girtins were his favourites, but by the solemn poetry of Cozens and the feathery grace of Gainsborough's landscapes his sympathies must also have been profoundly stirred.

In these early months fortune smiled first on Hilton, but it was not long before De Wint too came in for a share in her favours. At one time the friends seem practically to have had a common purse; for each in turn supplied the wants of the other, so that ill-luck to hurt one had to hit both. Hilton, although the younger man, was the more mature as an artist. His apprenticeship had begun six good years before his friend's; he was three years his senior in the Academy Schools; and moreover his training had taken what was then thought the more orthodox route. It was therefore not surprising that he could turn out heads and portrait groups to better purpose financially than De Wint. But before long the latter's powers as a landscape painter began to attract patrons, and not more than two years had elapsed before the stream of commissions, which was to grow steadily in volume to the day of his death, began to flow. With this happy result the completeness of his conceptions had much to do. Unlike those even of his ablest contemporaries, his drawings were pictures. They were neither fragments nor impressions. They were fully furnished creations, which might, in nine cases out of ten, have been expanded without loss to ten times their size. Look, for instance,

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at the *Lincoln*, in our plate. It is reproduced from a small drawing of Sir John Fowler's. In arrangement, in fulness of detail, and in general largeness of conception, it has the balance of a Claude and the dignity of a Girtin. I do not mean that De Wint's fuller conceptions place him above Girtin—who was essentially an impressionist—but simply that, in their time, they insured him favour from those who liked completeness and did not understand the audacious silences of art. In saying all this I run the risk of being misunderstood. For in some ways De Wint was one of the most incomplete of painters, and as life went on he too became a master of impressionistic selection. No man knew better how to summarize, how to reduce a tree to its elements of mass and value, how to indicate the accidents of a foreground with a single sweep of a half-empty brush. It is not objectively that he is complete. It is not by finish that he attracts. It is by the fulness of his conceptions, by the faculty he shows for winning a coherence, to which line, colour, and value each contributes its fair proportion. But at present I must refrain from discussing his art.

In May, 1807, Dr. de Wint died, leaving five children still alive. The eldest son, who inherited the practice and his father's property, was content to make a small provision for his mother, which came to an end with his own death soon after, and to allow the younger children to shift for themselves. These were Peter; a younger brother, Thomas, at this time studying medicine; and two sisters. Peter was only twenty-three, but he was already making a small income by his work, and with some difficulty contrived to afford the help his elder brother refused. On the death of the latter, his mother too came to him for support. Her youngest son, Thomas, was only seventeen when his father died, and time had to elapse

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before he could be her stay. This however he became at last, and in his house at Ancaster she died, in the autumn of 1834, at the age of eighty. Thomas's own death took place in 1851. His intercourse with the painter seems never to have been close.

Early in February, 1809, William Hilton was attacked by a violent fever in the rooms in Broad Street. His mother and sister came from Lincoln and shared his nursing with De Wint. In this matter the young man's zeal seems to have outrun his ability, for on one occasion when it came to his turn to sit with his friend and "exhibit drugs," he poured a glass of vinegar down the patient's throat by mistake! "Oh, De Wint, you have killed me! that's not the medicine!" cried Hilton. De Wint rushed off through the streets for the doctor, passing on his way the front of the old Drury Lane Theatre, which was just bursting into the flames that destroyed it, and being constantly stopped by people who wanted to know where the fire was. But at last he reached his goal and was made happy by Dr. Baillie's assurance that the vinegar would do no harm. As soon as he became convalescent, Hilton was carried to Lincoln—where the fever returned and nearly ended fatally—and De Wint gave up the rooms in Broad Street, settling for a few weeks in Carburton Street, but moving to the cathedral city for the summer. In the autumn the two friends returned to London, and took lodgings in Norton Street, Portland Road. Hilton's health was still precarious, and De Wint's quiet care of him invaluable.

The winters were spent on De Wint's part in hard work at the Academy, and in making drawings from his summer harvests of sketches. At this time he painted as much in oil as in the lighter medium, and would have devoted himself to that *métier* but for the difficulty he found in selling its results. With his drawings

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it was otherwise, almost from the first. Those he sold, at modest prices, as fast as they were finished. In the confidence this gave him, he proposed an early marriage to the girl to whom he had lost his heart four years before. They were married at Lincoln on June 16th, 1810, and after a short visit to London, they settled there for the autumn. About the middle of September De Wint made his first short sketching tour in Yorkshire, and then he, his wife, and her brother, established themselves in the house in Percy Street in which they were to live until 1827. In that year Hilton was elected keeper of the Royal Academy and migrated to Somerset House, while the De Wints moved to 40 Upper Gower Street, where they spent the rest of their lives.

I have now traced De Wint's uneventful career through what may be called his probation. Born an artist to the tips of his fingers, he was yet free from the enthusiasm which leads men to sacrifice prosperity to future fame. From his boyhood he seems to have understood how to "cut his coat according to his cloth," to make the best of actual conditions, and to avoid all chance of shipwreck on the world's impossibility. At Smith's he contrived to so develop his true gift for landscape, that his master was ready to exchange four years of service for a series of pictures in a style foreign to his own predilections. And it is characteristic of De Wint that this bargain was carried out to the letter, although he must often have been sorely tempted to delay its fulfilment. Free, at twenty-two, to order his own life, he had the energy to combine hard work at the Academy with the making of an income by the prosecution of an art in which his work from the antique would do nothing to help him. Again, in spite of his own strong preference for oil, in which, as

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he must have known, he could have won a wider and more permanent fame than in the delightful but essentially modest art of the aquarellist, he turned to the latter and to teaching, as to the line of least resistance for one who had to win a competence in the England of eighty years ago. Such conduct may not have been heroic, but it had about it a certain fitness, a contentment with the means at hand, which is perhaps more in harmony with the artistic nature than a more valiant conception of life.



III.

EROM his marriage and settlement in Percy Street until his death, nearly forty years later, De Wint's career was as uneventful as the course of a Dutch river. His reputation both as painter and teacher grew steadily with his years. At first he received no more than a guinea or so for a small drawing, and five shillings an hour for lessons. In 1827, the first year for which his accounts have been preserved, five guineas was his lowest price for a drawing, and fifty his highest; while his lessons were paid for at the rate of a guinea an hour. Living prudently, completely happy in his art, widening, as the months passed by, his circle of friends among those to whom he looked for patronage, he has left little to chronicle beyond his yearly excursions in quest of material. The household in Percy Street had few excitements. The arrival of a daughter a year after De Wint's marriage, the consequent delicacy of his wife, and Hilton's disappointments in connection with 'high art,' were the chief breaks in the even tenor of existence. The winters, from October to February, were passed mainly in painting. Mrs. de Wint was her husband's constant companion while he worked, exercising that talent for reading aloud which had been discovered by Miss Linwood. The spring and early summer, the London season in fact, was given up entirely to teaching, every hour but one, from nine to six, bringing its lesson

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and its guinea. The late summer and autumn were passed in the main at Lincoln, whence excursions were made into more picturesque districts, and visits paid to those buyers of his drawings who had become his personal friends.

In those days there was no world of artists. Art clubs in the modern sense did not exist. Some of the great lights of the profession went into society, but those of more homely tastes had little opportunity to meet even fellow-workers in the same field. The chiefs, afterwards to be famous, of our water-colour school, lived apart, often in strange quarters of London, and sallied forth but little from their homes, except to give the lessons to which they looked for their daily bread. Their *esprit de corps* was not yet awake. They held themselves for the most part for tradesmen; were not ashamed to bargain; and frankly called the class that employed them and bought their works "the gentlemen." De Wint's birth may have led him to stand a little aloof. It was better than that of the average painter of the day, and from his character it is likely that such a notion had weight with him. Among his correspondents I find few artists, and not one who writes on any intimate footing. But he was often received on terms unusual at the time by those whose acquaintance he had made as their teacher. He and his wife were frequent guests of Lord Lonsdale, at Lowther Castle, of the Clives, at Oakley Park; of the Heathcotes, at Connington Castle; of Mr. Henry Cheney, at Badger.

Mr. J. M. Heathcote tells a strange story connected with a visit to this last-named friend. One night, when the family and their guests were about to retire, the painter declared that he felt an oppression on his chest by which he knew there was a fire in the house. Much incredulity was expressed, but De Wint

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was so emphatic that a search was set a-foot. For a long time this was without result. Just however as the attempt was about to be abandoned, flames burst out through one of the floors. Being taken in time the conflagration, which must otherwise have been disastrous, was put an end to before much damage had been done. Many of De Wint's most vigorous sketches were made near Badger, in the Dingle, a rocky valley with a stream scrambling through it.

Among other friends with whom we find him in communication at various times were Alaric Watts, Lord Camden, Lord Northwick, Sir David Wilkie, Lord Brownlow, Mr. Fawkes of Farnley, Mr. Ellison, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Champerknowne, Sir Watkin Williams Wynne, Sir Charles Mordaunt, Sir Thomas Baring, Mr. Edward Coleridge, Mr. John Penrose, and John Constable. In the annual lists of those who bought De Wint's drawings Constable alone represents his brother painters. His presence there is not surprising, for the sympathy between himself and the man who made such a picture as the 'Cricketers,' at South Kensington, must have been intense. But the absence of the rest of the fraternity is a little strange.

Close to the wall of Lincoln Castle a house was built for the Hiltons, which, however, was used by the whole family as a summer *rendezvous*. From the garden, over which many discussions took place and much pains were lavished, there was a wide and beautiful outlook, and here De Wint made hundreds of studies for skies. In this house—it was called Motherby Hill—Hilton senior spent the last eight years of his life. He lived very quietly, spending much of his time in the collection of prints, and latterly in following the careers of his son and son-in-law. Every trifling scribble of theirs, and every line that was written

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on their work, he religiously preserved. His death took place on the 7th September, 1822, just after he had completed his threescore years and ten. After her husband's death Mrs. Hilton lived with her children. And here perhaps I had better say what remains to be said of her son as he affected De Wint. William Hilton was elected an associate of the Academy in 1813, a full R.A. in 1819, and Keeper in 1827. In 1825 he had made a tour in Italy in company with Phillips, the portrait painter. With a flying visit to Paris during the interval between the fall of Napoleon and the dismantling of the Louvre, and a short tour of a week or two in Belgium in 1835, this made up his experience of the Continent. It is said in the dictionaries that he married De Wint's sister. That is a mistake. His wife, Justina, was the eldest daughter of the Rev. G. D. Kent, of Lincoln. Their marriage took place in February, 1828, when Hilton was already forty-two, and their housekeeping began in the old Academy rooms at Somerset House. The change was not fortunate for Hilton. Though devotedly attached to his wife, and she to him, their happiness was marred by the weak health of both; while disappointments which had weighed comparatively lightly upon him as a bachelor, now depressed his spirits and lowered his vitality. Through all these years De Wint was hopeful and encouraging, and after his friend's death we shall find him working hard for his fame. Seven years after Hilton's establishment at Somerset House his mother died in the arms of her son-in-law. She was buried in the churchyard of the Savoy. On the 8th October in the same year Justina Hilton died suddenly, and was buried in the same grave. In 1836 Hilton moved to the new quarters of the Academy in Trafalgar Square. By this time his health, which had always been weak, began finally to break down, hastened in this no doubt by the loss of his wife. One bitterly cold winter night he left the

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heated atmosphere of the Academy schools and travelled down to Kingston on the mail. The transition, as he might have guessed, was more than his feeble frame could bear. A severe illness came on, and from it in spite of one or two rallies, he never truly recovered. He went with the De Wints to Matlock, but the change did not end in improvement, and on the 30th December, 1839, he died at his friend's house in Upper Gower Street. He was buried in the Savoy beside his wife and mother.

During the ten years that were left of his own life we more than once find De Wint bestirring himself on behalf of his friend's reputation. Of this the most curious instance had to do with the purchase, by the Corporation of Liverpool, of Hilton's large *Crucifixion*. For some time the picture was hung in a bad place and without a frame. De Wint prepared an address to the Mayor and Burgesses, begging that it might be framed and placed in a better light, and, in a letter of which a copy lies beside me, he endeavoured to induce the President and Council of the Royal Academy to join their signatures to his. To this Sir Martin Shee demurred. Reading between the lines of his answer, one seems to guess that reluctance to appear as suppliants before a less august corporation was the real cause of the Council's refusal to stir in behalf of their colleague's fame.

The friendship between Hilton and De Wint was so close and unbroken that it would be difficult to treat their lives apart. Neither was of an expansive nature; neither made friends easily or often; and so perhaps they clung the more tightly to one another. And although they did not, as so many have thought, marry each other's sisters, Hilton's foreign wife, if I may use the phrase, was no disturbance to the concert, for her incursion did not take place until he had reached middle age, and had left the De Wints for his official home at the

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Academy. During the lifetime of the two friends Hilton's fame was wider than De Wint's. He was an Academician, a painter of religious and historical pictures which brought him dignity if they did not fill his purse, and it is certain that if the average man of culture of fifty years ago had been asked which was the more surely destined for immortality, he would have answered Hilton, without a qualm. But fame has taken her revenge. Most of the Academician's pictures have vanished from the surface on which they were painted, while those that remain undamaged show a talent very far below the genius of De Wint. One of the best I have seen is a group of Mrs. de Wint and her child, in the possession of Miss Tatlock, that child's daughter. It was painted before Hilton began those experiments with asphaltum which have had such a disastrous effect on most of his works.



IV.

E must now turn back on our steps to the year 1811, which saw the birth of De Wint's only child, and the beginning of a long period of ill-health for his wife. Shortly after the little girl's appearance she was carried to Lincoln to her grandmother, with whom she spent the first years of her existence. These years have left little to record of her father and mother. Their life in Gower Street has left so slight a trail, that it is not easy to divine the real significance of the little we do know. In December, 1821, we find Richard Woodhouse dining "at De Wint's with (John) Taylor, (Allan) Cunningham, and the 'Opium Eater.'"¹

On this occasion Cunningham seems to have told the story of Wilkie's introduction to Hogg, in a form inconsistent with the version he afterwards gave in the painter's life. The conversation also turned on poetry, on "the sort of compensation in poetic melody which requires a heavy or spondaic line after a dactylic or lighter one," on Oxford and classical learning, and the general ability of university men, ending, so far as the notes are concerned, with De Quincey's story of his presentiment of the little Wordsworth's death. All this seems to show that De Wint was a well-read man, and had not failed to profit by his wife's devotion as a

¹ *Notes of Conversations with Thomas de Quincey*, by Richard Woodhouse.

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reader. But I have not been able to gather much corroboration of the hint it gives, and in the few cases in which the painter is found in relation with men of letters it is not his more amiable side that he shows.

In 1840 Allan Cunningham writes for a few particulars of Hilton's life in the timid style of one who is in doubt as to his reception. In 1827 we find John Clare inditing an epistle of thanks for a design for the title-page of his poems. Two years later he writes again, and, with simulated boldness, begs for an original drawing. The letter is charming in its way. Clare, it appears, had been asked by Miss De Wint to enrol himself amongst the family correspondents. He agrees with pride, and then goes on with gathering diffidence to make a request: "The request being neither more nor less than a wish to possess a bit of your genius to hang up in my cottage, by the side of friend Hilton's beautiful drawing, which he had the kindness to give me when first in London. What I mean is one of those scraps which you consider nothings after having used them, and that lie littering about your study. For nothing would appear so valuable to me as one of these rough sketches, taken in the fields, that breathe the living freshness of open air and sunshine, where the harmony of earth, air, and sky form such a happy unison of greens and greys, that a flat bit of scenery on a few inches of paper appears so many miles. For so some of those beautiful little things appeared to me which you so kindly indulged me with a sight of in your study eight or nine years back—alas that it is so many, for time has made a sad gap in my little catalogue of friends since then! I don't know how it is, but nothing in the Royal Academy and other exhibitions, struck me so forcibly as representations, or rather as fac-similes¹ of *English* scenery as those studies of yours . . I think many painters look upon Nature as a Beau

¹ An unlucky word!

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on his person, and fancy her nothing unless in full dress. Now Nature to me is very different, and appears best in her every-day *déshabillé*; in fact, she is a lady that never needed Sunday or holiday cloathes, tho' most painters, and poets also, still consider that she does need little touches . . . to make her beautiful. . . The reason why I dared to take this liberty of a request, is, that on hearing that you had the kindness to make a drawing for the frontispiece for nothing, I felt heartily anxious to thank you for the kindness, and having done so (excuse my vanity), I felt as heartily hopeful that I should one day possess the drawing, but never having those hopes gratified, my disappointment has at last grown up into a determination above timidity to request something of the kind, which would give me a pleasure to possess. Having done so, if I thought it needful I should ask your pardon, but feeling it otherwise I shall ask nothing about it, but go on in begging you will kindly remember me to Mrs. de Wint, &c., &c." . But Clare's pleading brought no reply, and in an undated letter to Taylor, he long after confesses the chagrin he had felt.

It is a pleasanter task to shield the faults of one's hero than to point them out, but even in a sketch like this, salient characteristics are not to be ignored if one cares for truth of impression. The fact is that De Wint had the true *bourgeois* respect for money; it came to him, perhaps, with his Dutch blood, but there was nothing in the life then led by English painters to root it out. On one occasion he found it necessary to sketch a few cows on the margin of his pupil's paper, and so he charged five-and-twenty shillings for the lesson instead of a guinea. Again, a gentleman having bought some drawings, the price was named in guineas: "There are no guineas now, De Wint, so we'll call it pounds." "No, you won't! My price, sir, is guineas." "Really, you don't mean to quarrel for the shillings?" "Don't I? The shillings are my wife's, and I

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would quarrel with you for two straws—so take them or leave them.” And there are many more stories of the same kind. On the other hand, all accounts agree that he was scrupulously just and loyal. There is no suspicion, in his case, of more than an exceedingly keen eye to the main chance.

On occasion, too, De Wint could relax this insistence on his price. In 1843 he accepted, from the Royal Dublin Society, a sum less than half what he had asked for eight of his drawings, begging them to consider the balance his contribution to their work; and three years later we find him agreeing to make a set of examples for the students in the society’s school, also at a reduction from his usual rate of payment.

It was mainly, of course, to his determination to retain all the profits his work would bear, that his shyness of dealers was due. Mr. Vokins was the only one with whom he had any continuous relations, for an isolated and mistaken transaction with Mr. Griffiths, who had left the Church to become a middleman between painters and buyers, had been scrambled out of almost as soon as entered. Mr. Vokins gives a droll account of his introduction to De Wint. Knowing the painter’s dislike for his fraternity, he persuaded a mutual friend to act as introducer.

“ You know Mr. Vokins, I suppose, De Wint? ”

“ No! but I’ve heard of him.”

“ He is anxious to have dealings with you and to have your drawings.”

“ I dare say he is,” was the reply, looking hard at his visitor: “ I never made a drawing for a dealer in my life. I have a great dread of ‘em, and rank ‘em with horse-dealers. Besides I make drawings for gentlemen, and have only one price.”

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Here Mr. Vokins interposed.

"Well, Mr. de Wint, if you will make me some gentlemen's drawings, I am ready to pay a gentleman's price."

"I don't see how that can answer your purpose," replied the painter, "for I suppose you want a profit; you don't buy drawings for the love of 'em; but," continuing "if you want my work and will pay my price, you had better come back in a week, and I'll speak to my wife." In a week Mr. Vokins returned. De Wint received him more graciously, putting a folio of lesson drawings, not sketches, before him, and saying his price for any one, finished, was seven guineas. The dealer chose six, which the painter completed most conscientiously. After that their relations gradually became more cordial. Prompt payment was grateful to De Wint, and during the last years of his life many of his best works passed into the hands of Mr. Vokins at prices that now seem nominal. What the painter's feelings would have been could he have known that a drawing for which he received thirty-five guineas, would be sold within twenty years of his death for sixteen hundred and fifty, we can scarcely guess.

De Wint preserved his enthusiasm for open-air sketching to the end of his life. His delight in it seems to have been even greater than that felt by other painters of his time and *métier*. He was never tired of proclaiming the happiness it gave him, and even in his later years would often become so absorbed in a sketch as to disregard weather, thereby, his wife declares, laying the seeds of the disease from which he suffered at the end. Here perhaps I may quote a few pages from that MS. by Mrs. de Wint to which I have so often referred. They give a sketch at first hand of the painter's course of life during more than thirty years.

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“ Most of De Wint’s early and valuable studies were made at Lincoln and the neighbourhood, where he ever found new beauties and new subjects, and what a commonplace observer would consider flat and unmeaning, was in his eye picturesque. The long extensive distances, with their ever-varying effects, the flats bordering the river, covered with cattle, the groups of vessels in the Brayford, the cornfields and hayfields and, above all, the magnificent cathedral seen from so many points, afforded him unceasing delight. He was partial to river scenery, and studied much on the borders of the Trent, about Newark and Nottingham, while with the Thames he was very familiar and frequently remarked on the different character of the two rivers: one so bright and sparkling, the other soft and silvery. Rapid streams delighted him much, and the Wharfe, the Lowther, the Dart, and others, were studied with the greatest intensity. He preferred the north of England and spent much time in Yorkshire, Cumberland, and Westmoreland. . . . Lancaster was also a place he greatly admired, and he made many distant views of the fine old castle. . . . In 1824 he went into south Wales and was greatly pleased with the scenery in Glamorganshire, particularly Britton Ferry and St. Donat’s. The latter he thought the most romantic place he had ever seen. Gloucester and its fine old city also afforded subjects for his pencil. The Wye rather disappointed him, although he was much pleased with Goodrich and Chepstow, and especially with Tintern Abbey. Even in the generally considered unpicturesque county of Norfolk he found much to interest him, and spent many happy weeks at Castle Rising . . . from Castle Rising he visited the village of Hunstanton, where he was delighted with the bold sea coast, and also with the fine old mansion belonging to the family of L’Estrange. He also went to Norwich and Cromer, and made many studies of the fishermen at Sheringham, and was charmed with their picturesque appearance, and above all with their truly religious character. From

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having in early life seen very bad drawings of Wales he had an idea he should not like the scenery, and consequently did not go there until 1829 or 1830, but, seeing the country himself, he declared it was the land for a painter. The sublime and beautiful were so blended and diversified, that every step afforded a subject for a picture. He afterwards visited the Principality several times, and followed routes kindly suggested to him by the late lamented Earl of Powys and Sir W. W. Wynne, both of whom were so well acquainted with the country.

“ His last visit to the mountainous district of Caernarvon and Merioneth was in the summer of 1835. . . He spent much time in the neighbourhood of Ludlow, at Oakley Park. . . He delighted in Ludlow, its river, fine old church, and castle. . . It was from Oakley that De Wint first visited Wales, going to Wynnstay and the lovely scenery of the Dee, and to Powys Castle. . . He ever remembered with extreme pleasure his first introduction to this most interesting place on a fine summer’s evening. The setting sun seemed quite in keeping with the venerable structure and its massive entrance, long stately gallery, and, above all, the lovely view from the window of the drawing-room. . . He made finished studies of Caernarvon, Conway, and Harlech Castles. . . He admired Shropshire, which county he frequently visited, having many friends there, and he spent a good deal of time in the neighbourhood of Bridgenorth. . . He made many excursions with the Marquis of Ailesbury, whom he ever found a most kind patron and friend. Later in life he visited this favourite county (Yorkshire) generally every second or third year, and became familiar with every part of it, except the neighbourhood of Duncombe Park, which he always regretted not having seen. In 1828 he made a short tour in Normandy, which was the only time he was out of England. He had many advantageous offers

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to go abroad and great inducement urged, but he could not prevail upon his wife to accompany him, and he was so averse to being separated from his family, that he never went. . . With Normandy he was disappointed," as Hilton was with Italy, "and," adds Mrs. de Wint, "they were both rejoiced to get back to London."

Among the De Wint drawings bequeathed to the National Gallery by the late Mr. Henderson, there is one of *Tours*, which suggests that the painter went farther south than Normandy. This however is the only hint I can find at any extension of his travels beyond the limit named by his wife. Perhaps the drawing in question may be from a sketch by some one else. It is known that he sometimes worked in that way. During his last years, when his health made exposure to the weather dangerous, he more than once made use of the powers of younger people to gather the material he could no longer collect for himself. Just before his last illness he had made arrangements for a vicarious expedition of this sort, in which sketches of selected bits were to be made by a niece, Miss Burrup, in the neighbourhood of Malmesbury and Gloucester, where Miss Burrup still lives. In the *Tours* there is a *pentimento*—the cathedral has been much reduced in height and size—which seems to confirm the notion that he did not make it on the spot.

V.



PART from what is to be gleaned from a scanty correspondence and a few roughly kept accounts, Mrs. De Wint's manuscript is the only source to which we can turn for knowledge of what De Wint was about during the years which followed his marriage. Immediately before that event took place he was elected an Associate of the Society of Painters in Water Colours, and twelve months later, a member. In 1821, when a reorganization took place, he withdrew, and at the end of 1822 we find Copley Fielding, who was then secretary, sending him an offer of readmittance. "I am directed," he writes, "by the Society of Painters in Water Colours to acquaint you that they resolved, at their last anniversary meeting, to offer to yourself and a select number of those gentlemen who were formerly members of the . . Society, the opportunity of joining . . as members, without previously passing through the degree of associate exhibitor, or being subject to any ballot; &c., &c." A copy of De Wint's answer, declining the honour "for the present," appears on the fly sheet. It was not until 1825 that his name was restored to the catalogue.

From 1827 onward, De Wint's wanderings can be traced by the lists of works kept by his wife. In these are set down the subjects he painted, the people to whom he sold, and the prices they paid him.

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In 1827 his subjects were mostly from Cumberland, Westmoreland, Lancashire, and Yorkshire, and include large drawings of *Dacre Castle*, *A Cornfield in Westmoreland*, *Aysgarth Force*, and *A View in Silverdale*. In 1828 the large drawings are *Kenilworth*; *On the Brathy, Ambleside*; *View in Lancashire*; and *Distant View of Lynn*. In 1829 the fruits of his Norman trip are present in a *View of the Château d'Arques*, a *Caen*, a *Dieppe*, and a few more. In 1831, most of the subjects are Welsh; in 1832, with a few Welsh drawings, I find many from Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, and South Yorkshire, a selection which is repeated in 1833. In 1834 nearly everything in the list comes from Cumberland, Westmoreland, or North Lancashire, while in 1835 a few subjects from perennial Lincoln and from the south, from the Isle of Wight and the neighbourhood of London, are mingled with scenes from the same rich sketching ground. In this year his prices appear to have taken a sudden leap, for instead of two or three guineas for the least important I find ten. For eighteen drawings sold during the year the prices amount in the aggregate to £477, which is a considerable increase upon a total of £194 for 1828.

In 1836 his subjects are again chiefly Welsh and Cumbrian, but they include *Lincoln Cathedral*; and 1837 the more important drawings are again from Lincoln, from London, and from the Norfolk coast. In 1838 we are back in Cumberland, Western Yorkshire, and Derbyshire, and to these districts he remained faithful for two or three seasons. On his way through Derbyshire to his favourite sketching grounds in the north-west, he seems every summer to have made a drawing of Matlock High Tor, while in later years, after about 1834, he was accustomed to stay his steps in Huntingdonshire, and to sketch within reach of Connington Castle, the home of one of his best pupils, Mr. J. M. Heathcote. Mr. Heathcote must

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have been a prime favourite, for in the accounts for the year 1840, it is recorded that De Wint presented him with "a little upright landscape, a rural scene," which, he notes, "was made with Miss Sotheby." In 1841 he painted the large *West Front of Lincoln Cathedral, from the Castle Hill*, which was bought by Mr. Richard Ellison and now hangs at South Kensington. From this year onwards Mr. Ellison's name recurs more regularly than that of any other purchaser, until, in 1848, we find him buying four important drawings in a single year, two of which were the *Nottingham* and the *Walton-on-Thames*, afterwards given to the nation.

In these later lists the majority of the entries have quotations attached to them, from the Bible (a drawing of *An Effect on Crossfell, Cumberland*, was, perhaps, overweighted with the verse from Psalm cxliv.: "Bow the heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke"), from Shakespeare, from Milton and Scott, from Collins, and even more humble singers. These perhaps it was Mrs. De Wint's task to search out and fit. In the last four years of his life his subjects grew miscellaneous, as if he were then drawing rather upon his store of memory and sketches than gathering new themes. In a single year, 1846, I find scenes from Yorkshire, Derbyshire, North Wales, Ireland, Canterbury, and Harrow. In the list for 1844 Mr. Vokins figures for the first time, and every year to the last his name recurs. Interspersed with these accounts there are two or three lists of the drawings about to be sent to the Exhibition in Pall Mall East, and in each list the subjects marked as sold outnumber those which had to take their chance. In one case eighteen are already disposed of out of a total of twenty-nine. It was his custom to have a show at home before sending-in day. He arranged his productions in the drawing-room at Gower Street, marking those sold

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with a little white label. At these private views it was the habit of one wealthy acquaintance to lament, year after year, that this or that "perfect gem" was beyond his reach, being decked with the ticket. Such a game was a dangerous one to play with De Wint. After the little device had done duty some half a dozen times, he determined to be even with its inventor. The day came round for another private view. The friend arrived, and went into raptures before a pair of labelled drawings. "Now, De Wint," he exclaimed, "those are exactly the things I should like to possess; what a pity they are sold!" "My dear fellow," said the painter, slapping him on the shoulder, "I knew you would like them, so I put the ticket on to keep them for you!" *Tableau!*—But the drawings had to be taken; "otherwise"—De Wint would conclude—"I would have shown him the door."

For many years De Wint and his wife had cherished the hope of ending their days at Motherby Hill, within sight of so many scenes over which his brush had lingered: With that view the house had been much enlarged and improved in the interval between two tenants. But, in 1846, when it again fell vacant, De Wint's health had become so delicate, that it was determined to retain his headquarters in London. So the house by the castle at Lincoln was sold, and, during the few years that were left to him, the painter never revisited the scene of his early romance and of so many brilliant pages in the story of his art.

In the autumn of 1843 De Wint had an attack of bronchitis which nearly killed him. He had worked hard all the London season, and as soon as the last lesson was finished had gone off with a friend into Hampshire to make acquaintance with the New Forest. It had always been his custom to

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rest for a week after his migration to the country, but this time he at once began to sketch, fearing to disappoint his companion. The exertion and excitement, for to him it was excitement, proved too much for his strength, and it was with difficulty that he was brought back alive to London. Once having gained a footing, bronchitis ever afterwards lay in wait for him. In September, 1848, he made his last excursion. His goal was Dartington House, Mr. Champerknowne's home on the Dart. On his way he spent a day or two at Exeter and Totnes, walking much and exploring the scenery. He stayed nearly a fortnight at Dartington, and thence made his last finished sketch, which was afterwards used for the drawing reproduced in our plate 21. Throughout the winter 1848-49 he worked intermittently, but with the return of spring his health began rapidly to give way. He had his usual show of drawings for the exhibition, but soon after ominous signs of the end appeared. From the loving companion of his life he had endeavoured to hide the gravity of his condition, and, she tells us, it was not until within a few weeks of his death, that she realized dissolution was near. A slight paralysis added to the trouble caused by bronchitis, and, although he refused to take to his bed, the painter's vitality rapidly declined. On the 22nd of June he took a drive round the Regent's Park, and returned home exhausted and helpless. He never fully rallied, and eight days later he died in the arms of his wife. He was buried in the Savoy, in the same tomb as the Hiltons.

The beauty of De Wint's life was in his domestic virtues. We have seen his fidelity to the friend of his boyhood, but as yet I have said little of his love for his wife. This seems to have been devotion answered

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by devotion. Constant companionship, to judge by the few letters they had a chance of exchanging, for they were seldom apart, led to a *camaraderie* rare in married life, in which the petty details which hang about a prudent *ménage* were discussed in phrases which still have a ring of love. Only five years before his death Mrs. De Wint writes to him with a warmth that does not often survive nearly forty years of matrimony, and declares that "no reward can compensate for the pain of being separated." The same love breathes from every line of the manuscript memoir, where it is enhanced by the instinctive good taste with which she dwells upon her affection for her brother and upon his doings, too, in art.

The domestic felicity that De Wint had reached while scarcely out of his teens, came a little later to his only child. Their next door neighbour in Gower Street was one Mr. Paul Tatlock, a gentleman of nearly De Wint's own age. He was a man of property, with estates in Suffolk and Essex; and so when he began to pay court to the painter's daughter, Helen, he was allowed every chance. Miss de Wint was no longer in her *première jeunesse*. She had been born in 1811 and it was now 1844: and so the disproportion was not so very great. There were the hitches over settlements that, with a middle-aged suitor and a man of De Wint's character, could scarcely have been avoided. But in the end Helen was dowered; the marriage took place and turned out a very happy one. When Mr. Tatlock died his worldly goods came to his widow, who was also her father's heir.

After the painter's death his widow made a selection for herself from the works he had left behind. In this selection, which is still in part in the hands of her grand-daughter, Miss Tatlock, she included all

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the oil pictures and the best of the water-colour drawings and sketches. Great numbers of fragmentary sketches, things which, had they been thrown into the market would have given opportunities for many a swindle, were destroyed; and then the remainder, some five hundred sketches, studies, and finished drawings were sent to Christie's. They were sold in May, 1850. The proceeds amounted to £2,364 7s. 6d. Twenty years later they would have been ten times as much.

De Wint was of middle height, slender rather than stout, dark in complexion, and in youth black-haired. At this distance of time it is difficult to get at the whole truth about his character, but its broad lines may be divined. He had a strong will, a deep rather than wide power of affection, a vigour of impulse which was held in check by distrust of strange people and new ideas. Instincts that seldom erred made him an artist: industry, physical vigour, and readiness to accept conditions, brought him success. In one who by blood was half a Dutchman and half a Lowland Scot, it is not strange that a full regard for "gear" was combined with deep and sincere religion. For many years it was his custom to read a portion of Scripture and write out a prayer before he began his work, and this he never omitted even when travelling. In the last half of his life he devoured books of devotion, among which, we are told, one in particular made a strangely deep impression. His tastes, as we call them, were few. His one intellectual passion was for the nature he could grasp and render. He had room, though, in his soul for a few quaint affections. He was fond of chess, of gypsies, of curious locutions. He loved to hear poetry read, and he was a good hater. In

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his latter years he became so irritable with all but his most intimate friends, that men used to address him with caution, putting themselves in an attitude of mental defence to be ready for what might come. But a fault like this, and some others over which I have felt bound to cast no veil, may be easily forgiven to one who not only widened the horizon of art, but gave a life's devotion to the friend and the love he had found in his boyhood.



VI.

DE WINT'S method of teaching was in advance of his time. As described to me by Mr. J. M. Heathcote it was this. He would take any convenient objects he could find in the room and set them in a group on the table, with a towel or other white cloth carelessly thrown against them. These he required to be carefully imitated. He also induced his pupils to sketch out of doors, laying stress on form and the broader units of local colour. These sketches were afterwards used for finished drawings, in the making of which he would help by pointing out defects, and by practical illustrations with his own brush. "His object was to teach the principles on which the school of Holland obtained its fame, and to apply them to the rendering of English scenery."

When painting on his own account, he worked almost invariably on "old Creswick paper," which was manufactured in delicate ivory tints. This was always more or less granular in texture, which thoroughly suited his style, for it enabled him to strike his rich transparent tones well into the body of the paper. This he did by saturating it, and, while it was wet, mosaicing it, as it were, with rich harmonious colours, some cool, some warm and glowing. His aim was always to succeed by the first intention. The bloom of his colour

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was never disturbed in the shadows, "lifted" tints being confined to the half tones, and used only in his large works. His sketches and small drawings were carried out entirely in undisturbed colour. Body colour, like the rest of the great masters in the English art, he abhorred, but now and then he used it. The reverse I know has been maintained, but both the recollection of some of those who knew him, and the evidence of a few among his own drawings, unite to prove his occasional backsliding. Look for instance at the minute panorama of Nottingham and its neighbourhood, in the South Kensington Museum; there the cattle and some parts of the foreground are reinforced by loaded touches of colour mixed with white.

Like all robust masters, De Wint made use of few colours and the simplest means to obtain his effects. His strength was in what he had to tell rather than in the elaboration of the telling. His palette therefore was short, more short perhaps than safe. According to Mr. Orrock, to whom I am indebted for some of these details, it consisted of the following pigments:—¹

Indian red (not the ordinary preparation).	Brown Pink.
Vermilion.	Burnt Sienna.
Purple Lake.	Sepia.
Yellow Ochre.	Prussian blue (also a special preparation).
Gamboge.	Indigo.

¹ The list was given to Mr. Orrock by a pupil of De Wint.

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All painters now and then indulge in a few colours outside their daily list, but this was De Wint's usual orchestra. As for tools, he commonly worked with a large, round, well-worn brush, mounted in quill, and with a second of about the same size, but new and with a fine point.

But in saying all this I may be confirming the common but mistaken impression that De Wint's powers were confined to landscape and water-colour. The presence for the last fifteen years of his two finest oil pictures in the Gallery at Kensington has done something, little known as they are, to correct one part of this mistake. They prove that even as a worker in oil he deserves a place among the foremost, but they leave untouched the notion that his affections were confined to landscape. It was circumstance and not predilection which drove him into a groove. All through life he made intermittent attempts to get out of it, and to give a wider scope to his art. These attempts became fewer and less serious as time advanced, but nevertheless they have left enough proofs behind that his powers and tastes were both alike catholic. Miss Tatlock has a number of studies—figures, boats, carts, buildings, and, above all, flowers—which show that in whatever came before him he laid his hand largely upon its artistic capabilities, and fitted it with a rendering at once broad and faithful. Few better tests of æsthetic instinct can be named than the painting of flowers. To paint them as Van Huysum painted them requires much skill in arrangement, in the management of tints, and in the handling of a brush. But to paint them broadly, to render, rather than imitate, their colour, to combine truth to form with a coherent arabesque, to unite in fact the decorative instinct of the Japanese with the European demand for creation, argues a much higher order of intellect. And this power De Wint possessed. The flowers I have seen

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of his are but studies in sketch-books, but they display the same grip on available truth that gives distinction to his landscapes.

After he had once begun to be known as a painter in water-colour, De Wint seldom or never sold an oil picture. But he never ceased to paint them. Every year saw the addition of one or two to his collection. As soon as they were finished, they were taken up into the loft of the house in Gower Street. This had been boarded, plastered, and whitewashed, and fitted with narrow ledges on which the canvases could stand. When a "patron" displayed any curiosity about his work in oil, he was taken up to the primitive gallery at the peril of his neck. But such excursions never ended in a diminution of the stock. After the painter's death Mr. Vokins made his way to the loft, and he has told me of his amazement at seeing so many fine things so utterly unknown. Most of these pictures are still in the possession of Miss Tatlock, but the two best with a pair of less importance were presented to the Kensington Museum by her mother, the painter's daughter. Like the rest, they had been sent to the Academy and either rejected or skied. Fifty years ago that august body was not kind to water-colour men who dabbled in oil. It either wished to hold them to their lasts, or, failing to understand their works, took for granted they were bad. In the first instance Mrs. Tatlock made her offer to the National Gallery. At that time the late Sir William Boxall was director. He perhaps had never heard of De Wint as a painter in oil. In any case he was so little attracted by the lady's proposal that he never even tried to see the pictures, and so Constable's *Cornfield*, and *Haywain*, and *Valley Farm*, are left without two of the best companions they could find in Europe.

Both pictures are splendid. In their *facture* traces, no doubt, of a method based on the peculiarities

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of his more accustomed material, are to be recognized. In the *Woody Landscape with Water* the handling is broad and flat, the colour almost fluid, the general aim purity of tint. The *Cornfield* is comparable to one of those drawings in which an infinite modulation of tone and atmosphere is won by broad washes of colour scientifically laid and elaborately manipulated. Our plate, No. 22, has ignored the sky, and has falsified a tone here and there; the figures on the left for instance, and the clump of trees beyond them, are too dark; but otherwise it fairly suggests the beauties of what may, I think, be called the masterpiece of De Wint. It is an early harvest in July, with the noon-day sun striking down through the summer haze, and bathing a wide champaign in a glowing gold to which the ripe corn seems to give a conscious echo; with reapers—for it has been a case of “cut and carry”—herding in the shadows of the stooks to eat and rest; with the drowsy horses sleeping as they stand, and the vaporous clouds hanging motionless against the depths above. It is our English summer at its best, and our English art. Simple is the tale it tells, and frank the telling. Warm in tone, luminous in colour, coherent in line, and assured in *technique*, it unites nearly all the best qualities of the best of the schools of landscape.

If to the picture I have just described, we add the drawings reproduced in our plates 20, 7, 21, and 1, we shall get a fair idea of De Wint’s range. In the *Conisborough Castle* dignity and concentration are won by breadth; in *Haymakers* similar qualities are employed to give a less solemn impression; *On the Dart*—almost, if not quite, his last important picture—is more panoramic; it has less unity and depends but little on form. Lovely as it is, and true no doubt to the scene, it is scarcely a creation,

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and in that is less characteristic of De Wint than of the school to which he belonged. The fourth drawing, *The Entrance to Lincoln, with the West Front of the Cathedral*, is remarkable for the beauty of its arrangement and for the firmness and comprehension with which the great church is drawn.

In De Wint's finest works which, with a few exceptions, I take leave to think those inspired by solemn rather than by smiling scenes, there is a dignity which suggests Ruysdael, and is equalled in English art only by the best drawings of Girtin. And it is a dignity won without artifice. De Wint never dresses a scene in gravity that is not its own. He never deals otherwise than frankly with colour. In his drawings local tint has a purity of truth approached only by Constable. Even in those things in which the solemn note is strongest, in the *Ruins of Lincoln Castle*, for instance, at the National Gallery, there is no attempt to win repose by making tone do the work of colour. It is won as nature wins it. Accidents are shorn away with a skill that never errs, but in the fusion compelled by the change of scale, the key-note is never for a moment lost; in the labour of creation the limits of material are never for a moment forgotten. As consummate examples of De Wint's more sunny manner, I may name the little panorama of Nottingham and the famous *Cricketers*, both at South Kensington. Unfortunately changes in the sky, where the Indian red has eaten up the blue, have deprived the latter of its freshness; but De Wint's supreme powers as a colourist are still to be enjoyed in its undamaged parts. The groups in the middle distance, and the felled trees in the foreground, display a wealth and veracity of local tint which are even yet unrivalled. This gem long lay *perdu* during the painter's life. He always stretched his drawings on a board before they were framed

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for exhibition, and when one returned unsold, he would sometimes strain another over it, to save the expense of a new stretcher. This he had done with *Cricketers*. After his death Mr. Vokins discovered its existence by the merest accident, as he was preparing for the sale at Christie's.

De Wint's place in English art is with Constable and David Cox. Like Constable he saw instinctively the true capabilities of English landscape, and, like Cox, the true powers of the medium in which he worked. His *coup d'œil* for a subject was even finer than theirs. He seized with a quicker instinct on the best point of view, the most rhythmical combinations of line, the most effective chords of colour. His sense of unity was almost unerring. In his most hasty sketches, no less than in his finished pictures, there is ever a central idea led up to and enhanced by every touch of his brush. He was less robust than Constable. He had none of his inability to follow; none of his desire to combine illusion with balance, to make the restlessness of nature shine through the repose of art. Neither had he the intense sympathy with nature's moods which distinguished Cox, nor his sense of the brotherhood between still life and humanity, nor his love for the infinites of colour. His greatness depends more on insight than imagination, more on selection than inclusion, more on unity than width of view. He was, in short, more strictly, more narrowly some might say, an artist.

THE END.

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS,
LONDON AND BUNGAY.





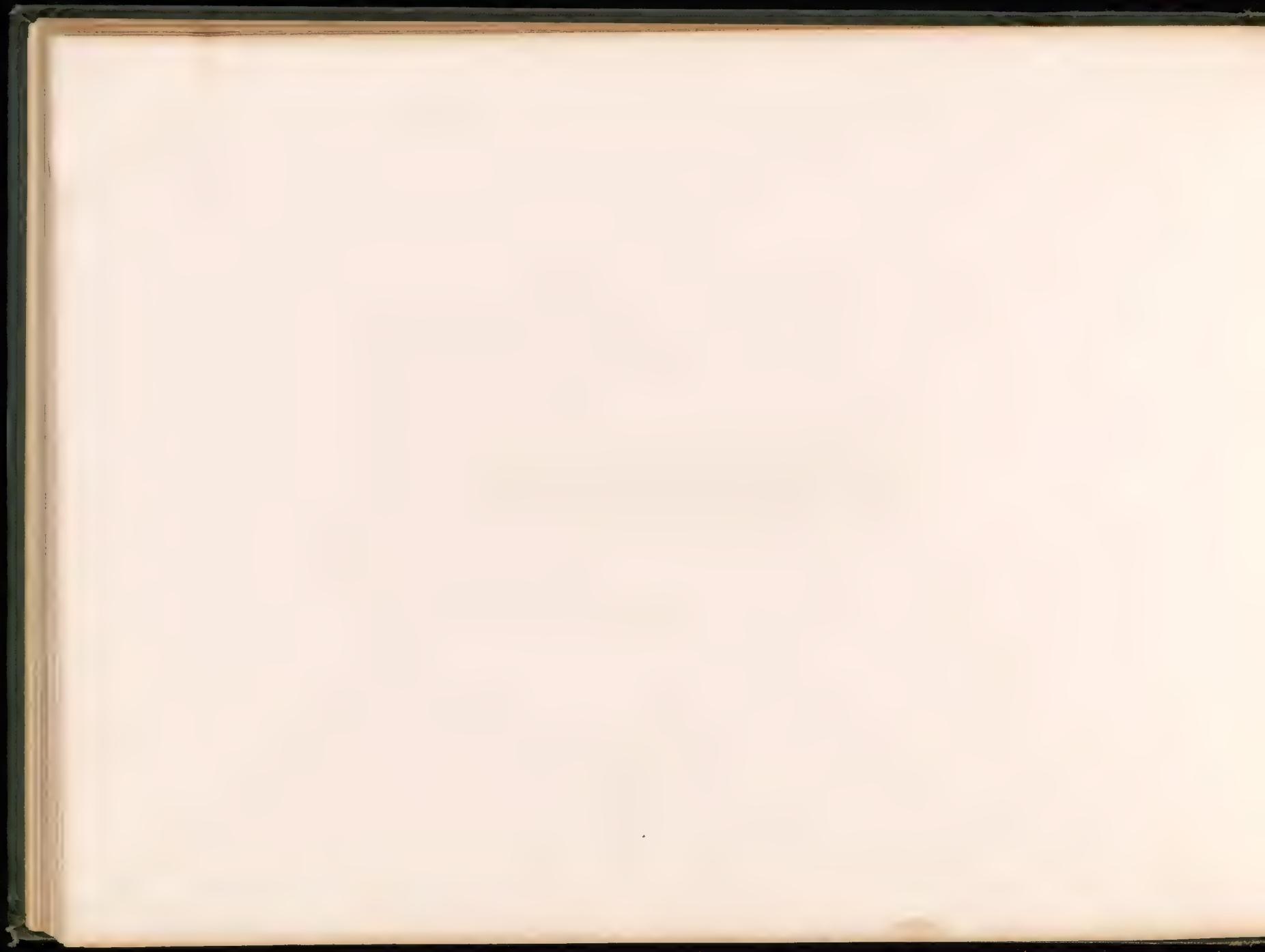
































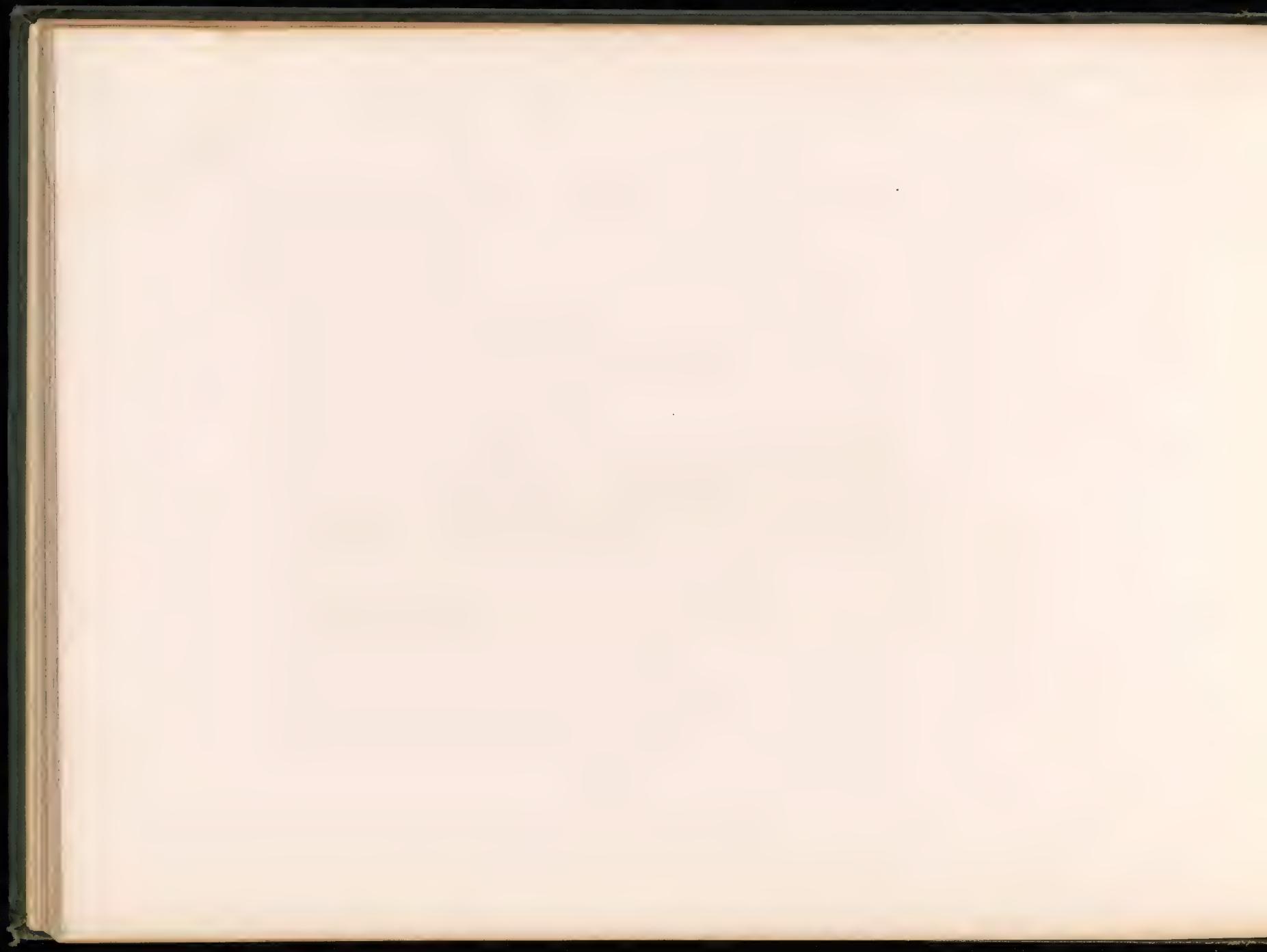






























Ueno Park





















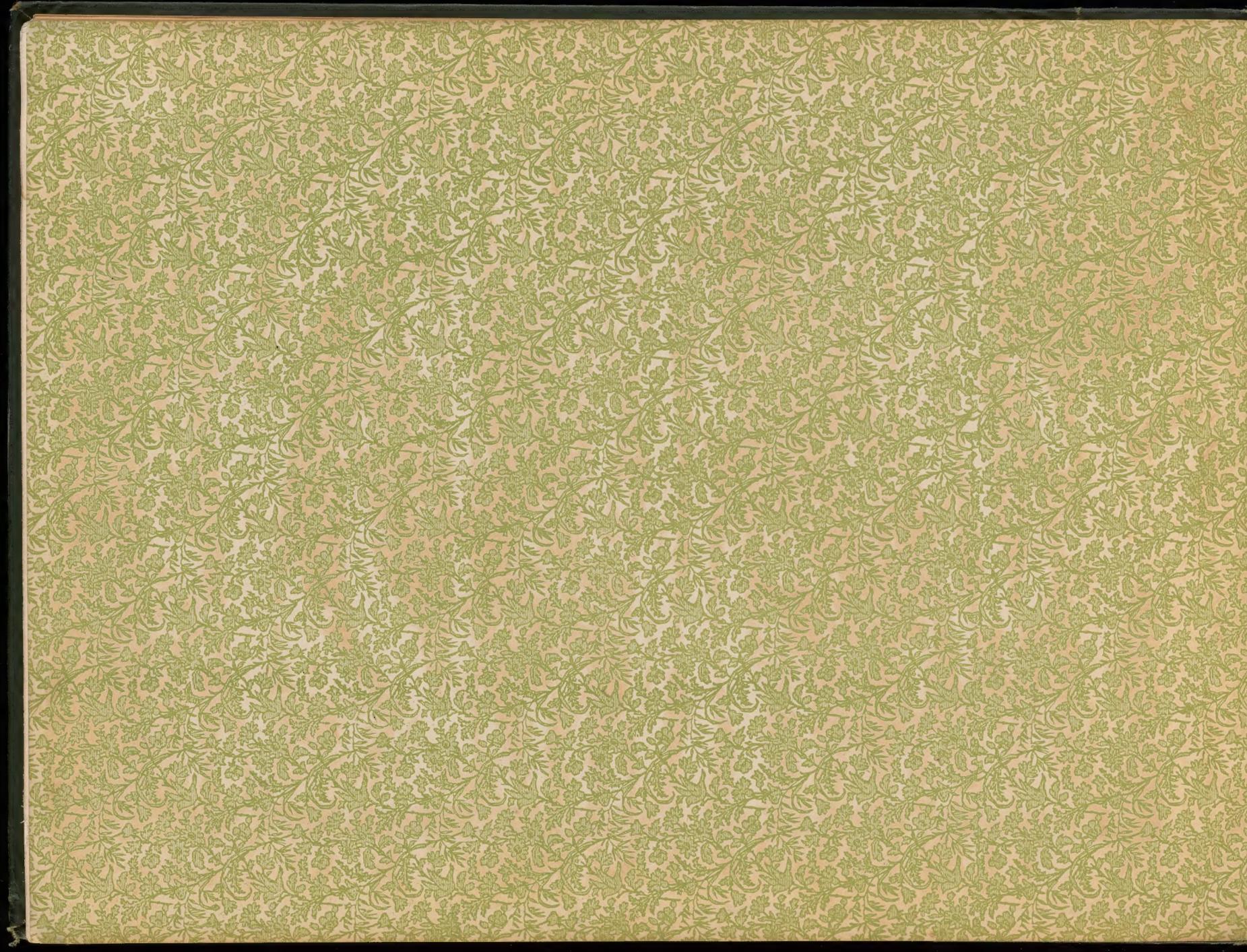






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